

Church Safety Policy

“Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.”
(1 Peter 1:15)

As a community of Christian faith, Church of Christ Congregational is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

We recognize that our congregation’s health and safety is a key aspect of our culture of caring. It is our objective to ensure a safe and healthy environment for our church members, staff, visitors and the community in accordance with federal, state and local regulations and recognized safety standards. Our spiritual mission depends on the health and safety of our members and the proper maintenance of our facilities. Wise stewardship of our God-given resources will help us to succeed in our ministries of service.

Definitions

Minister: a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. Ministers include elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as Authorized Ministers.

Authorized Minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

Ministerial Relationship: the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Sexual Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in a ministerial relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.

Vulnerable Adult --

Any adult person who by reason of profound physical disability or dependence, developmental disability, mental illness, relative social power or cultural circumstances may be susceptible to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation or manipulation as a consequence of being unable to physically resist, or render judgments regarding physical, mental, financial or environmental well-being. Such persons may be unable to act independently and may, to their detriment, manifest high levels of trust or fear of persons of perceived power or authority.

Requirements for Beginning and Continuing Ministry

- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will submit a disclosure form.

- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers may be personally interviewed to assess the qualifications for the position they seek.
- The church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each Minister by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov. This registered sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all Ministers. In addition, all ministers may be required to submit to a background check.
- Authorized Ministers of the church will attend all boundary workshops required by the Connecticut Conference of United Church of Christ and will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three years, whichever is more frequent.

Additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry/Vulnerable adults

Church of Christ Congregational is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

In order to promote this, we have established the following guidelines in addition to the general requirements for ministry to the church.

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors and/or vulnerable adults are members of Church of Christ Congregational or, if not members, are regularly and frequently associated with Church of Christ Congregational.
- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth and/or vulnerable adults will complete and submit a disclosure document.
- Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for youth activities and for vulnerable adults receiving pastoral care. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two unrelated adults present. Youth over the age of 12 may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.

Sexual Harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

The Safe Conduct Committee with no less than two members, will be established in preparation for the possibility of hearing complaints under this policy. The Safe Conduct Committee will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as the established procedures of the church for dealing with a complaint.

The complainant may request that the Safe Conduct Committee institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:

- The Safe Conduct Committee shall advise the Minister and Moderator of the receipt of all

complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Minister or Moderator is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply to that person.

- The Safe Conduct Committee shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information.
- The Safe Conduct Committee shall take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. Including, but not limited to contacting appropriate state agencies.
- The Safe Conduct Committee may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.

A written summary of the Safe Conduct Committee proceedings in such cases will be maintained.

The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. At any time the church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process.

Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the Safe Conduct Committee, he or she has the right to appeal to the Moderator, or to Governing Board if the Moderator is the subject of the complaint.. The subject of any such appeal to the Governing Board shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits and the decision of the Governing Board will be the final resolution of the matter. If the Governing Board determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to the Safe Conduct Committee to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

II. Child Abuse

Apart from any legal requirements, the Church of Christ Congregational will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child. Any Minister of the church who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Minister and Moderator so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The Connecticut Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline currently is: **800-842-2288**.

III. Clergy

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the church, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will promptly be forwarded to the Church & Ministry Committee of Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The Connecticut Conference of the UCC may be contacted at: 860-233-5564 or and/or www.ctucc.org.

**Church of Christ Congregational
Authorized Volunteer
Application and Disclosure Form**

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Name: Last | First | Middle |
| Address: Street | City/State | Zipcode |
| Daytime Phone | Evening Phone | Email |

References: One reference should be related to you and the other references should not be related to you.

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|--|
| Name | | | | |
| Address | City | State | Zipcode | |
| Telephone | | | Email | |

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|--|
| Name | | | | |
| Address | City | State | Zipcode | |
| Telephone | | | Email | |

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|--|
| Name | | | | |
| Address | City | State | Zipcode | |
| Telephone | | | Email | |

Q I have been a member of this church since _____
Q I have been a friend of this church since _____

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state)

Q True **Q Not**

True

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Q Yes **Q No**

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Church of Christ Congregational and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

Church of Christ Congregational authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize Church of Christ Congregational and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that Church of Christ Congregational will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the Church of Christ Congregational Safe Conduct Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN)

DATE

(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18)

DATE

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____

True

Not True

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True

Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

True

Not True

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)

Do you have a valid drivers' license?

Yes

No

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True

Not True

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Church of Christ Congregational and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

Church of Christ Congregational authorized volunteer and employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize Church of Christ Congregational and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that Church of Christ Congregational will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

- I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the Church of Christ Congregational Safe Conduct Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN) **DATE**

(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18) **DATE**

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____
- Church membership or frequents association with Church of Christ confirmed on _____
- Safe church awareness training and policy orientation performed on _____

Additionally, if considered for employment:

- Criminal History Verification completed on _____
- Copy of valid driver's license and current/active insurance card taken on _____